

The
Need of Belgium

A Few Words by

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**The Commission for
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An Appeal to America

On Behalf of the Belgium Destitute

I

Seven millions stand
Emaciate, in that ancient Delta-land :—
We here, full-charged with our own
 maimed and dead,
And coiled in throbbing conflicts slow
 and sore,
Can soothe how slight these ails unmerited
Of souls forlorn upon the facing shore!
Where naked, gaunt, in endless band on
 band
Seven million stand.

II

No man can say
To your great country that, with scant
 delay,
You must, perforce, ease them in their
 sore need :
We know that nearer first your duty lies :
But—is it much to ask that you let plead
Your loving-kindness with you—wooing-
 wise—
Albeit that aught you owe and must repay
 No man can say ?

—THOMAS HARDY

America's Part in the War

By MAY SINCLAIR

Last night I sat up until one o'clock in the morning reading the reports, published and unpublished, of the American Commission for Relief in Belgium, dated from October 31 to December 5. It was impossible to put them down. From the appeal of Albert, King of the Belgians, signed, we are told, "under fire in the battle before Dunkirk," to the last bald summary of the work of the Commission, those typewritten pages held me enthralled. Their story is one of the most poignant, most terrible, most superb in history.

It simply tells how a small handful of American business men in London were visited with an idea. The idea was so preposterously vast, so incredible, so impracticable that the authorities to whom it was first imparted may be forgiven if they smiled in tender pity. It looked so very like the kind of an idea that originates with a handful, not of business men, but of lovable humanitarian lunatics. It was the idea of feeding the entire Belgian nation at a time when transport was impossible, and money not to be had for love or money. There are seven millions of starving people in Belgium, and it takes one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to feed them—for one day. The rest of the calculation is beyond me. The mind reels at the figures it involves.

Now this superbly impossible thing is the thing that these business men, backed by the whole

American nation, have been doing—not for one day, but for two months. Sitting in their offices in London, they took America's backing for granted and made arrangements accordingly. America might have stood aside with a clear conscience. She was not responsible for the state of Belgium. This was not her war. She has nothing to gain by the war, and a great deal to suffer by the sheer nuisance of it. She had nothing to gain by helping Belgium, nothing—not even international prestige—to lose by not helping her. She might have said, not perhaps with the best possible grace, but with a staggering show of reason: "It's up to Germany and France and Great Britain to feed Belgium, if they go bankrupt in the attempt."

But she said: "Germany won't feed Belgium anyway, even if she has the food. France and Great Britain can't. So it's up to us." Simply, as a matter of course, as a plain duty of which there can be no question, she took up this almost superhuman, this entirely superhumanitarian task.

The Sad Sight of the Unenlisted Poet

Now there is something about a war, especially a big war, that reduces every non-combatant to insignificance. Everybody feels it. It is as if the streaming glory of life had passed them by. The business man, sneaking ignominiously to his office, feels it. The artists

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—the novelists, the musicians, the poets and the painters—feel it. They and their works have become for the time being utterly unimportant. There is no sadder sight in England at the moment than the poet who has not enlisted. The only writer who can hold up his head is our special correspondent at the front. The pacifist feels it in his secret heart. The women feel it terribly. Apart from pity and humanity, this sense of the utter worthlessness of the non-combatant is at the bottom of the rush of so many people to the front, to the firing-line if possible.

It is the protest and the effort of the struggling and perishing personality against the thing that annihilates it. And if this is true of the non-combatants among the nations who are at war, it is true to some extent of neutral countries. They may thank their Stars and Stripes that they are out of it, but out of it they are.

Say what you like about the infernal horror and terror and cruelty of war, about the sheer, sordid grime and squalor and the appalling waste of it, as long as nations have pride and valor and endurance, the glory and the splendor of war will remain. Belgium owes her immortality to her part in the war, just as America owes her immortality to her War of Independence and her Abolition War. And yet, thrill for thrill, I for one confess that nothing, if it be not Belgium's heroic defiance of Germany, has moved me more than America's Relief of Belgium. There is no sense in which the splendor of this war, which is not her war, has passed her by. She is saving Belgium to-day more surely than the armies of the Allies.

The Glory that is Belgium's

If some political exigency had compelled her to stand by us with her army and her navy she would not have given us a greater thrill. Her armed intervention, which could only have come by cold political exigency, would not have touched us in the same way. Nor could it have given us the same assurance for the future. If, as Mr. Bernard Shaw has told us, America is to have a decisive voice in the ultimate settling of the terms of peace, we shall know that it is the voice of a nation that did not stand aside in the hour of our necessity, but took her splendid part.

It is too soon for either side to talk of victory. We and our Allies are convinced that we are going to win in the long run—though it will be a very long run indeed from the western and eastern battle lines to Berlin. We are certainly going to win or die. But when the war and the splendor and the horror of it have passed into history, when America's part in it comes to be written, we shall have to own that, though there was no other way for us but war, and though the splendor of it is as incontestable as the horror, America yet showed us "a more excellent way."

The Beauty of a Prosaic Food Ship

A long time ago, in the autumn or winter of 1905, I saw the American and British battleships lined up in the Hudson. Every ship that sails to sea compels to adorations, from a super-dreadnought to the humblest coaler steaming across the Atlantic, and the battleships were indescribably beautiful and terrible. They provided an unsurpassable thrill.

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And yet I would have foregone that sight gladly to have seen the transport ship *Massapequa* steaming out of New York Harbor laden with her 3,560 tons of bacon, rice, beans and flour, to have seen her and the *Coblentz* and the *Jar Blocke* arrive at Rotterdam; to have seen the Dutch stevedores leap on board and empty them; and to have seen the barges going up the canals to Antwerp and Brussels and Malines. I am sure there was never a more stately spectacle than the transport ship *Massapequa*, and no ship ever made a prouder voyage.

The worst is over for Belgium so long as the good American transports come and go. But nobody who has not been to Belgium within the last five months can picture, can even dimly conceive that country's desolation. I was there in Ghent with Dr. Hector Munro's Motor Field Ambulance from the last week in September to the middle of October. The misery was intense even then; by this time it must be appalling.

If anything could make it sadder it was the extreme beauty of the country and the towns we passed through, open towns and country formed for the very expression of peace. Behind us to the west, along the high road from Ghent through Bruges to Ostend, the villages and towns were as yet untouched; the fields, the plots of flowers lay still and vivid, soaked in the rich autumn sunlight. But before us to the east and south, and northwards round Antwerp, was ruin and war. Wherever our ambulance cars went they met endless processions of refugees; endless, for the straight, flat Flemish roads are endless, and as far as your eye could see the stream

of people was unbroken; endless because the misery of Belgium is endless; the mind cannot grasp it or take it in.

Author Cannot Believe What Her Eyes Saw

You cannot meet it with grief, hardly with conscious pity; you have no tears for it; it is a sorrow that transcends everything that you have known of sorrow. These people have been left "only their eyes to weep with."

But they do not weep any more than you do. They have no tears for themselves or for each other. Of all the thousands and thousands of refugees whom I have seen, I have only seen three weep, and they were three out of six hundred who had just disembarked at the Prince of Wales's Pier at Dover. But in Belgium not one tear. That was the terrible thing—that and the manner of their flight. It was not flight; it was the vast, unhastening and unending movement of a people crushed down by grief and weariness, pushed on by its own weight, by the ceaseless impact of its ruin. And that was before the siege of Antwerp.

After the siege the stream thickened and flowed from another direction; that was all. All the streams seemed to flow into Ghent. Even before the siege of Antwerp I saw six thousand refugees sleeping on straw in the *Palais des Fêtes*, packed so tight on the floor of the immense hall that there was no standing room between any two of them. I can only say of that sight that it is worse to remember than it was to see. You could not believe what you saw; you were stunned as if you yourself had been crushed and numbed in the same catastro-

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phe. Only now and then a face upturned, surging out of that incredible welter of faces and forms, smote you with pity, and you felt as if you had received a lacerating wound in sleep.

The Feeding of the Multitudes

From six till nine in the morning this population streamed into the great inner hall to be fed. They were marshalled first into the seats of the vast orchestra and auditorium, where they sat like the spectators of some monstrous festival and waited for their turn at the tables.

I helped to serve these meals for two nights, until, in fact, we were forbidden to go into the Palais des Fêtes lest we should bring back fever into the military hospital where our ambulance was quartered. The first night we fed 10,000. The ration was two slices of white bread and a bowl of black coffee. Meat for soup had been given for the midday meal at first, but by this time the army had commandeered all the meat.

This was the state of things in Ghent before the German occupation. Heaven knows what it is now! And the state of Ghent must be nothing to the state of Brussels, of Louvain, of Malines, of the small towns and villages all over Belgium.

The figures as revealed by the Commission for Relief are appalling. It takes over 13,333 tons of foodstuffs, at a cost of \$150,000, to feed for one day the 7,000,000 of people who are starving in Belgium. This allowing only 10 ounces of food a day per head. Thirty-one thousand of this multitude are babies in Brussels alone, who must have milk. The supply of cereals alone for a

month is estimated at 80,000 tons, and a cost of from four to five million dollars.

In the beginning of November 400,000 meals a day were distributed in Brussels alone. By the end of the month they increased to 600,000. Mr. Hoover, the Chairman of the Commission, on his return from Brussels in the first week of December, stated that there were only 15,000 sacks of flour in the city when he left it. Fifteen thousands sounds a very large quantity of sacks of flour, but it is only provision for five days; and the report adds that Liège, Louvain, Charleroi, Namur, Luxembourg and other cities are only provisioned for two or three days.

And these are the large towns, where the relief work is necessarily concentrated and organized at its very best. From the country districts, from the villages and small towns the appeals for help are heartrending. It is famine there, with the frightful menace of all that follows from famine in a land held by the enemy.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of what America has done and is doing. The provinces of Limburg and Luxembourg made appeals to the German authorities for food; Antwerp, Malines, Lierre, Saint Nicholas and six other towns made appeals and were refused. But when America stepped in the German authorities unbent so far as to give safe conducts and every facility for the transport and distribution of supplies. And, so far, these supplies have been held sacred to the starving enemy.

Five million dollars a month is the sum appealed for to save Belgium from famine.

The Prodigious Problem of Belgium, with a Few Words to the Kind Heart

By ARNOLD BENNETT

On a day in last month the loading of the ship "Massapequa" was finished in New York. She is a 100 A1 steamer, over three hundred feet in length, and her freight was 3,560 tons of food-stuffs.

This cargo was packed and stowed with such skill as to arouse special admiration not only in New York but in Europe. Captain McCardi has a detailed plan of all of it, so as to facilitate unloading. Captain McCardi, who has never sailed for European waters before, cast off his moorings amid the acclamations of a people.

His first voyage across the Atlantic was full of adventure and peril, and once owing to stress of weather he had to lay to in mid-ocean for several days. At length he arrived at the Hook of Holland, and the news that his ship was sighted threw the whole city of Rotterdam into a vast fete.

The American naval attaché from Berlin travelled to Rotterdam to meet this wondrous ship, and other American diplomatic officials joined him. Before the vessel was made fast to the quay at Rotterdam, 500 Dutch stevedores had jumped aboard and started the work of unloading. They worked day and night for fifty hours, and easily surpassed all the records of the port.

And while they toiled, speeches

were made, full of enthusiasm and gratitude, banquets were held, and the Burgomaster of Rotterdam invited all the official world to be his guests, amid the music of the American National Anthem. Everybody felt with deep emotion that a tremendous international deed of charity was being accomplished.

In due course the ship was emptied and the canal barges were filled, and the ship departed again, while the canal barges, drawn by express tugs, and manned by crews each individual of whom had a special pass from the German authorities, swung forward with the 3,560 tons of bacon, rice, beans, and flour for Limburg, Charleroi, Mons, Ghent and other places where the representatives of American good-will were ready to distribute it. The vast business was successfully done.

A Ship a Day

But let it be noted that M. Rolin, the Belgian official who in the speech-making at Antwerp returned thanks to America on behalf of Belgium, uttered the sentence:

"There is just enough stuff on this ship to feed starving Belgians for one day."

This sentence should be daily remembered by the charitable of all countries. If the miracle of the "Massapequa" were repeated every

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day throughout the winter until the end of the war, the starving Belgians would get just enough to eat.

Holland, England, and France seem to be swarming with Belgian refugees, who are being fed and clothed and housed. But between them the three countries accommodate only a million; and this million is the fortunate minority of the victims.

There remain, and will remain, in Belgium seven millions of tragic inhabitants. In the country districts eighty per cent of them are women and children, who, as though hypnotized by disaster, haunt hopelessly the ruins in which they can scarcely recognize their homes.

Many districts are nothing but graveyards. There is no seed to sow. There are no implements. There is no money. There is no credit. There is no means of transport. There is no work. And there is very little heart, save in a small corner of that once prosperous land, the corner still dominated and inspired by the courage of King Albert and his soldiers.

No modern famine was ever like this famine, because it is universal. The entire population has to be fed, and those whom charity does not reach will die. Over a thousand appeals for succor are received by one committee in one day.

Where the Kind Heart Is Needed

There are whole districts utterly without grain, flour, beans, peas and even salt. For three weeks in Terhaegen there was absolutely nothing edible except potatoes. In Brussels alone 400,000 meals per day are being served; the theoretical price of each meal is one sou, and few can pay it; the poor and those who were rich stand side by side waiting the dish that will keep them alive. Women beg at the

street corners for a centime (the tenth of a penny). In Antwerp a thousand women, ill-clad, wait shivering in the snow for the hour of the free meal.

The condition of the Belgium refugees in certain parts of Holland is appalling. At Rotterdam you can see over four hundred human beings crowded into one barge, living on it like vermin, and with little more decency than vermin.

They must exist somewhere, and Holland is doing all she can; she is indeed performing prodigies. At Berg-op-Zoom there is a camp of 3,000 refugees, living in tents amid a quagmire of snow and slush. Two families live in each tent. Their bit of smoky fire is made in an old pail. Their diet is coffee, bread with a little butter, and bacon-soup.

They sleep on straw, all crowded together, men and women, oldsters and youngsters, infants, grandmothers, and women momentarily expecting babies. And yet they prefer this life to life in Belgium, and they are sure that those who have adventured back to Belgium will return, if they can, to the lesser horrors of the Dutch camp.

Seeing Behind the Curtain

If I thus raise ever so little the curtain behind which is proceeding the ineffable, unparalleled, and hardly conceivable tragedy that in its completeness and its dread overtops all previous national tragedies, my aim is not merely to harrow the feelings and excite the urgent pity of readers, but to assist them to realize the vastness of the task which now confronts the world's charity.

Every home in Belgium wants help. A million and a half persons in Belgium live from day to day on the mercy of soup-kitchens. Unless men, women and children are

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to die of starvation, over eighty thousand tons of food must be brought into Belgium every month, and even this will only give to each individual half the quantity of food that is given to a soldier. It will be the barest subsistence. Its cost will amount to about five million dollars a month.

That these quantities are not sentimentally inflated is shown by the one simple fact that before the war Belgium regularly imported 230,000 tons of cereals alone every month. Three thousand tons of salt are required monthly. Some places had no salt whatever for two months. The transport of the food, quite apart from its prime cost, absorbs about a million dollars a month. (Happily the finance of the transport has already been arranged for some months to come.) Such figures speak a language which would render eloquence contemptible.

The Organization That Will Help

Now there is one channel, and only one channel, by which relief can reach the Belgians in their own country. It is the "Commission for Relief in Belgium," and it comprises the American, Spanish, and Belgian Commissions. Its chief offices are at 3, London Wall Buildings, London, England; and 71 Broadway, New York. This Commission has due and full authority from all the Governments concerned, including the German Government. It has taken over the marvellous organization created in a few weeks by a small group of Americans; and its chief energy is still, of course, American. Its functions are the reception, transportation and distribution of food-stuffs. All its workers are voluntary. Its huge shipping business is managed free of charge by promi-

ent and generous firms of shippers. It co-operates with all organizations in America and elsewhere.

The Commission will finally succeed in the tremendous work which it has undertaken, if one condition is fulfilled. That condition is that the charitable throughout the civilized world shall personally and intimately realize in their own hearts the immensity and the urgency of Belgium's need, surpassing all the needs of history.

The Commission does not merely demand enormous help; it demands enormous help all the time. In spite of all the marvels of goodness which have already been achieved, and for which Belgians are inexpressibly grateful, the Commission still has to demand enormous help all the time.

It cannot succeed unless an unending procession of great ships of food continues to cross the seas for months and months to come. The kind heart which leaps just once to a kind act, and then forgets, will do less than its duty. The kind heart must brace itself to a long winter of constant, indefatigable endeavor. It must exist permanently in a state of active well-doing; or failure will result.

For myself, I have a profound faith in human nature, and I do not doubt that the benevolence of mankind will prove equal even to the terrific strain of this unique hour.

The cause to be served cannot but consolidate all creeds, parties, politics and sects. It is one cause today about which the whole human race must passionately agree. It is a cause to stir the noble impulse of generosity in the meanest soul. For the Belgian people are innocent, and the Belgian people are suffering as none ever suffered before.

The Babes of Belgium

By WILL IRWIN

Two or three little pictures before I really begin:

It was the Pas de Calais at the end of October—an October blessed, in this year of dread, with clear, cool, bracing weather, much like our own Indian Summer. Around a turn in the road came a strange, shuffling multitude, doubly strange in that well-ordered landscape.

At the head marched an old woman, a stalwart, straight-backed Flemish woman, vigorous in spite of her sixty years. Beside her walked a boy of not more than twelve, his figure already settling into a peasant solidity. He, like the old woman, carried on his back a bundle wrapped in a sheet. And between them they dragged by the hand a little girl, not more than six years old—half carried her, since now and then she raised her feet from the ground and let them support her.

It was plain to see why she lifted her feet. Her poor little shoes, heavy though they had been in the beginning, were worn clear through. Her clothes and hair were matted with dirt, and her face was gray with it, save for the streaks made by her tears. She had stopped crying now; she was past that. There comes the time with all these refugees, young and old, when they get beyond tears.

Behind followed the rest of the refugee caravan, like these leaders except for minor details. Of course, there was not among them

a man of vigorous years—only a few grandfathers, trudging along beside their women folks. Mainly, it was a collection of young children—all, like the little girl in the leading party, beyond tears with misery.

A dozen of the women, at least, carried babes in arms who had somehow survived the miseries of days and days of walking. These were the last of the Belgian refugees to pour into France. They came, mainly, from that thickly-settled, fertile, once prosperous southwestern strip, along which Germans and allies were now fighting for the bridge-head of the Yser.

But not all. Some of them—as I learned from the few who had the energy to talk—lived further North. A month before, they had fled from the German advance after the capture of Antwerp; and they had been fleeing ever since—sleeping in the fields through rain and shine, eating what bread of charity Heaven only knows.

The tail of the procession, I found, had halted at a crossroads beside which someone had erected a tent from blankets strung on sticks. As I approached, wondering what this might be, an automobile came whizzing down the road at seventy miles an hour—there are no speed laws for military automobiles in time of war. It stopped beside the tent; there was a parley; and a man in Belgium uniform wearing a Red Cross sash and on his arm alighted.

"What is it—what is happening?" I asked the first of the refu-

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gees beside the tent—an old man who crouched in the gutter.

"*Un enfant*—a baby is being born," he said briefly. The man in uniform was a Belgian surgeon taking time from his work of repairing death to assist in giving life.

Again: it was the next day in Calais—Calais, once so busy and so venerable, and in spots so pretty, but now faded and dirty with the passage of armies. Ten thousand of these refugees came into Calais that day. That day, also, the Red Cross was bringing in Belgian wounded by the thousand—there had been serious fighting along the Yser.

The refugees, herded or escorted by the police, streamed down the streets to the concentration yards prepared for them on the docks by the French Government, which was going to transport them to the Midi as soon as it could get the steamers. You would hear now and then the toot of an automobile horn, and the refugees would make way for the passage of a motor-car loaded to capacity with the white-faced wounded. The car would go on, and the refugees would close their gaps and resume their weary, nerveless pace.

At the concentration yards they sat in family groups, the children huddled about their mothers and grandmothers like chickens around hens. No child among them laughed or played; they were too weary for that; but no child cried. I was trying to have speech with these refugees, and finding them too nerveless to give any account of their adventures when an ambulance arrived.

A nurse and a physician descended. A woman rose from a distant group and joined them. She carried in her arms a bundle wrapped in rags. The slant of her back

showed that the bundle contained a child—there is an attitude of motherhood which none can mistake.

The women in the nearest group followed the pantomime with their tearless, hopeless eyes.

"What is it?" I asked.

For a time none of the women answered. Then one spoke in a dead tone.

"Her baby is dead," she said. "She had no milk in her."

All that happened on the fringe of Belgium, to the refugees who had made their way out and were nearing safety, and enough comfort to keep soul and body together.

I could multiply instances from the observation of others. There was, for example, the group of two hundred refugees who arrived in Holland early in November. They carried with them four dead, new-born babies.

It was the same story which one hears everywhere. The mothers were so reduced by privation that they had no milk of their own. As for cows' milk, it was not to be had for any money.

Add another picture, brought out by an American from Belgium. He stood one morning by the back door of a German cook camp, watching a group of Belgian women grubbing through the trash-heap piled up behind the camp. All these women carried babies.

"What are they doing?" he asked a German sergeant with whom he had struck up acquaintance.

"Scraping our condensed milk cans," said the sergeant. "It's the only way to get milk for their babies. I've seen them run their fingers round a can which looked as bright as a new coin, and hold them into the babies' mouths to suck. My company," he added, "has been getting along without milk in its coffee and giving it to

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these women. We've received no orders to the contrary—and we're mostly family men. But we're an exception; and it doesn't go very far."

Here is another recent picture from stricken Brussels, that gay, dainty, lively city in old times—the city whose smiling people called it *petit Paris*. The scene is the once busy, pleasant boulevard Bischofsheim. A woman collapses on a bench set along the sidewalk after the fashion of the Greater Paris. In her arms is a baby. A child staggers along, clinging to her apron. The woman's face is blue and yellow; she is on the verge of collapse. The baby, surely not over five months old, has a pale, lead-colored skin. Its mouth is open as though set that way. Its eyes are closed.

Two women of Brussels pass this unhappy group. They hurriedly exchange some words, turn back to the woman on the bench. Then one stands guard while the other hastens for some milk and bread—such as is to be found in the Brussels of to-day. They force a little milk between the teeth of the mother. They let the baby drink. It drinks as though it had never drunk otherwise.

To the face of the mother comes a few patches of color. She slowly recovers until she is able to eat a bit of bread. The baby opens its mouth, drinks more greedily. "It has not fed since two days," the mother whispers.

The mother tries to rise from the bench but she cannot. The elder child drinks the milk that is left. It looks curiously at the piece of bread as if it did not know what it was. The mother forces it to eat. A crowd has gathered, murmuring. This sight is not new, yet each time it draws a little crowd. Every one

would like to give—but no one can. Who is not poor at this moment? Many of them have children at home who to-day weigh less than the day they were born.

France and England and Germany and Austria are issuing their lists of the dead, which are mounting up day by day to a ghastly million. But these take account only of the strong young men who have died in the fighting. They do not take account of mere non-combatants. They do not list the women who, foolishly or ignorantly sticking to their homes, have died under the shell-fire of enemies or friends. They do not list the weak and helpless who have dropped out from the pathetic caravans of refugees to perish along the edges of the roads. They do not list those who are beginning to die by hunger in stricken Belgium. And finally, they do not list these babes of Belgium, dropping off before their lives have fairly begun, because there is no milk.

Let us view the situation in cold blood. Belgium is shut off from the world—ringed with steel. Her own food supply was used up long ago, either by the people or by their conquerors. The cattle were first of all to go; even in August I saw the Germans killing milch cows for rations. A cow or a small dairy herd is left here or there; but they are the exceptions.

The supply of condensed milk ran short long ago. Now milk is a necessity to most civilized children between the ages of one and two years. Some children, it is true, pull through, under exceptional circumstances of privation, without it; but these are the unusually sturdy; they stand apart from the rule. The average young child must have milk or he will die. And there is no milk.

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Again, the suckling baby must have mother's milk or a substitute. There is, of course, no substitute to be had in Belgium and equally there is little mother's milk.

Every woman knows that a civilized nursing mother must "keep up her strength." She must have nourishing food—in many cases special food. Every woman knows that a certain proportion of civilized mothers cannot feed their own babies even at that.

Nourishing food—special food! The news which filters out of that locked, stricken country to The Commission for Relief in Belgium makes a sarcasm and a mockery of those phrases.

In many, if in not most Belgian cities, the populace is down to one large baker's bun a day, issued by the municipal authorities. In some places, the authorities have been able to supplement that ration by one bowl of cabbage soup a day. One bun and one bowl of cabbage soup a day—for a nursing mother!

Yet that is all they have and all they will have this winter at the best America can do. The Com-

mission hopes at most to transmit ten ounces of food a day to each inhabitant of Belgium—and to do that the people of the United States must strain every resource of charity. How little that is for a civilized human being, and especially for a nursing mother, becomes plain when one learns that the average inhabitant of Greater New York consumes forty-two ounces of food a day. The mothers of Belgium can hope only for a quarter ration this winter!

Even allowing for the reduction of the birth rate due to the war, there must have been forty thousand births in Belgium since the Germans came. There will be forty thousand more in this winter of hardship and privation. How many of the newly-arrived forty thousand have already died unnecessarily—undecorated, unsung victims of this war—no one will ever know.

How many of the coming forty thousand will die this winter depends upon us in America—upon how much food we send to the nursing mothers, how much milk to the babies.

To the Rescue—AMERICA!

By JOHN GALSWORTHY

A nation hungry. Seven millions on the edge of famine in winter. The world has seen some black sights in its time; has it ever seen a blacker than this spectacle of Belgium starving?

America, you are a great country. America, without flattery you are the humane country. Save this little nation; this little, brave, starving nation.

A London slum-child prayed: "O Lord, if ye ever felt yer'd like to 'elp a feller, now's yer chance, O Lord." Now is your chance, America. We in England have done something; we will do as much as we can; but the scythe of sacrifice sweeps in all our fields. Funds are many; the war long and desperate. No more foodstuffs may be sent forth from this country, or from Holland.

But from somewhere foodstuffs must be sent, for the Belgians are starving. You in America are already doing much; you have given sympathy, and time, and money. But the dimensions of this catastrophe are terrible. Eight hundred thousand to a million pounds a month—by expert estimate—are wanted to keep starvation from these seven million people. Let me quote from officials sources some evidence of the appalling situation:

**Orphans, Orphans; Graves,
Graves**

From the report of **Theodore Waters**, secretary of the **Christian Herald**:

"I do not want this to be a history of the trip through Belgium, but only to recall some impressions of the people's need. Women of refinement herded with women of the street, both dressing and undressing in sight of all the men; a woman with nine children mothering her fatherless brood in the same room—these sights were bad enough. But I drove through ruined villages all the way from Antwerp to Brussels and I could liken it to nothing but going to a funeral through a long cemetery. Indeed, the country was one huge burying ground. Always between the ruined houses we could see graves. Graves, graves, graves. In some would be stuck a bayonet with a Belgian soldier's cap upon it. Above others rough white crosses rudely inscribed, 'To the memory of a Belgian soldier.' On one grave was a child's shoe; poor little mark of its parents' grief. Graves, graves. Orphans, orphans. A country devastated; its trees felled in rows to make way for bullets; its crops long gone to seed, standing up leanly; dead things in rows like markers in a miniature cemetery."

From Malines:

"In the name of His Excellency Cardinal Mercier, I beg leave to ask you for strong assistance. * * * In the city of Malines alone 12,000 mouths have to be fed every day. The children come to the German soldiers and tear the bread from their hands. * * *

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There is hardly a single laborer who can find any work to gain his daily bread. Everything is lacking—we are in want of potatoes, peas, beans, grain, flour, wheat and bacon."

From the Burgomaster of Wetteren:

"Wetteren is inhabited by over 17,000 people. * * * About 11,000 workmen and numerous families of militiamen are without resources."

From the Mayor of Hamme:

"For some time our (town) committee has had daily to distribute soup, bread, potatoes and milk for more than 5,000 men. Flour is hardly to be obtained. * * * The stock of meat and corn in Hamme will not last till the end of this month."

From the American Consul at Antwerp:

"I have been called upon by the Mayor of St. Nicholas, imploring me to hasten, if possible, such assistance as the American people could and would render, as they had over 20,000 people without bread and without work in their little town, and no means of providing them. * * * In the coal district near Charleroi a number of poor people, maddened with hunger, attacked a German military train laden with provisions."

From Captain J. F. Lucey, representative at Rotterdam of the Commission for Relief in Belgium:

"The total amount of supply so far available is entirely insufficient to meet the immediate and urgent needs of the people. * * * Reports and requests for assistance are pouring in. * * * The districts of Liege, Namur, Dinant, are entirely out of grain, flour, salt, peas and beans. A deputa-

tion has arrived from Terhaegen and states that for three weeks they have had only potatoes to eat."

From members of the Town Council at Namur and Liege:

"We are now threatened by famine. * * * We have suffered enough, at least let this misfortune be spared us. * * * To sum up the situation, an industrial population of high efficiency is entirely out of work and cannot earn its food. It has no reserves any more in food or savings, and a rescue is immediately and urgently needed. * * * You may rest assured that in spite of circumstances our population is full of courage and worthy of all the sympathy that the Americans and other nations can show."

From the account of an American eye witness, Mr. Jarvis Bell, who went through from London to Brussels with the first shipload of food: "If you could only see the gruesome surroundings in which they are struggling for existence. * * * Give each Belgian peasant \$1,000 and ten acres of land and then he could do little to keep himself alive. He has, in many districts, no home in which to sleep, no seed to sow with, no implements to work with, no transport with which to reach a market, and no heart to struggle against the impossible. No war ever produced such complete and tragic paralysis as we saw in many parts of Belgium. * * * We met few Belgian men, 80 per cent. of the people in these country districts are women and children; we saw them eating green vegetables, beets and apples; they have little else. There were thousands of children, all afraid to laugh."

From the account of another

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American eye witness, Mr. Millard Shaler, who went from London to Brussels on behalf of the Commission for Relief in Belgium: "Between Antwerp and Malines the destruction of habitation in every town and hamlet was practically universal. Families were living in partially burned buildings, or in improvised structures. The suffering is intense, and food supplies do not exist."

From the letter of an Englishwoman living in Brussels: "There is a terrible amount of poverty, sadness and distress here; people without any resources, and thankful even to any one who will give them a meal. * * * Altogether it is the saddest place you can imagine. Shops closed, everyone out of work and nothing but beggars and distress on all sides. Coal is not to be had for love or money."

The Amount of Food Needed

The amount of food required to deal with all this terrible distress is thus summarized in a declaration signed on November 2d, 1914, by the Spanish and American Ministers in Brussels:

"We declare that the statement of M. Francqui (Director of the Societ  Generale de Belgique), based on a careful estimate made by authorities entirely familiar with their own country and its present material needs, is that the minimum monthly requirements of the Belgian population are 60,000 tons of grain, 15,000 tons of maize and 3,000 tons of rice and peas. This estimate is accurate and wholly reasonable, is made by conservative and practical men of affairs, and may be accepted as an expression of the needs of the population."

To meet these requirements the Commission for Relief in Belgium, whose chief offices are 3, London Wall Buildings, London, have now completed their organization in the United States "on a basis adequate for the emergency of sending into Belgium about one million pounds worth of food every month."

Sufficient funds have been secured to enable the commission to supply vessels to take cargoes of relief donated in any part of the world, free of all cost, to Rotterdam, and to distribute the food in Belgium. Offices have been opened at 71 Broadway, New York, under the charge of prominent American business men who, like the other members of the Commission, are practically giving all their time to this work of philanthropy.

What the Germans Do

Finally, the following document records the official permit from Baron von der Goltz, the German Governor of Belgium, to the American Minister in Brussels: "I welcome with lively satisfaction the undertaking of the Comit  de Secours et d'Alimentation, and do not hesitate formally and distinctly to give assurance that foodstuffs of all kinds imported by the committee under Your Excellency's patronage, for the use of the civil populace in Belgium, shall be kept exclusively for the use of the Belgian populace; that these foodstuffs shall hereafter be exempt from requisition by the military authorities, and finally that they shall remain entirely at the disposition of the committee." The machinery of distribution is thus complete.

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The Blackest Case in History

Such is the record.

If there be in all history so black, so pitiful a case, I do not know it. A nation's life torn up—not by the roots as yet, for faith and fortitude remain—but mown off level with the ground. Belgium is deflowered, and done to living death; Belgium is starving.

If the hands of pity be not extended swiftly, the shame of this must forever haunt the dreams of all mankind. If Belgium be left to starve, how shall the world ever again sleep quiet in its bed?

America, you are great and generous. You stand for humanity as no country has ever yet stood. You alone, of all the nations fortunate enough to be outside the ring of this mad war, have wealth and strength for a task like this. You alone can keep the flame of hope alive, the pulse of life beating in this starving nation.

The world looks to you, America; looks to you to do justice to your own great heart. You have already lifted this burden of good deeds from the ground; shoulder it as you alone know how, with that fine, fierce energy of yours. See this work of rescue through—and all the world shall bless you.

Will America Raise a Monument of Pity?

No words have eloquence to voice the misery and peril of that

little country. Words are an insult. There is, there can be no American, of what origin soever, who has not suffered, thinking of Belgium—thinking of that charred land. Restoration will come. But to restore, needs must that the nation shall not have died first of sheer cold and hunger.

Famine is a very simple thing. First will go the old men and women; then the children—cold and hungry children—young birds with gaping beaks. And the strong last. Yes, famine is a very simple thing, with its stark and icy clutch.

Eight hundred thousand to a million pounds a month are needed to keep that clutch from the throat of Belgium.

Give, America, give! Raise the greatest monument to Pity ever built. Let it be a star in the sky, of all your future that you rescued from this miserable fate the old, the little ones, the strong, of a whole nation whose only sin was that it stood firm to serve mankind. Let it be a golden memory that you succored and uplifted them, keep the breath in their bodies and in their souls faith living; faith that humanity, the sweet humanity which alone can warm and sanctify our lives, is not a spent and driven ghost, but still flesh and blood, and a comrade in the dark.

The Fleet of Mercy

By ANTHONY HOPE

Belgium wants food. She wants it on a scale, with an urgency, and with an intensity which the imagination can hardly conceive. Even when aided by the vivid yet strictly business-like reports furnished by the representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, we find it difficult to grasp what the situation really is.

A multitude of Belgians have taken refuge in Holland, and have been received with a noble hospitality. Another multitude have succeeded in reaching Great Britain, and Great Britain is doing her best for them. But the bulk of the nation is still on its own soil—not merely or mainly for lack of choice, but by command of their King and his Ministers. They cannot leave their country derelict; they cannot let their claim to it go by default. They must stand by the ship, however fierce the tempest.

They are non-combatants, these people—women, children, and men not eligible for military service. It is the civil population of Belgium which suffers famine and is threatened with absolute starvation. And their number amounts to some seven million souls.

Seven millions! To victual them for a day needs the cargo of a good big ship. But they have to be victualled for months. For, as matters stand with her, Belgium can grow nothing, make nothing, sell nothing, buy nothing. Consequently she can eat nothing, and must die—unless somebody comes to the rescue. True, she is doing

what she can for herself. Belgian Relief Committees and Belgian men of means have guaranteed three million dollars towards the work of the Commission for Relief; practically every efficient person in Belgium has volunteered for relief work. Admirable as these efforts are, they are totally inadequate to meet the case; they do not detract from Belgium's claim on the world's generosity; nay, they strengthen it.

A Country That Can't Help Itself

Who is to help, then? Neighboring Holland is doing all and more than could be asked of her; herself a small country, she can do no more. Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, and Great Britain are all belligerent Powers; that fact sternly limits both their means and their opportunities. For example, Great Britain, though she welcomes refugees, and though she is in a position to give assistance in money, finds herself obliged, for military reasons, to prohibit the export of foodstuffs to Belgium. Who is to help, then, and who can help in a measure really adequate? That question was asked some weeks before I started to write these lines—asked and answered. The answer came with all the characteristically national clearness, promptitude, and confidence—"Why, America, of course!"

Mr. Whitlock, American Minister in Brussels, set the ball rolling; he enlisted the keen interest and powerful aid of Dr. Page, Amba-

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sador in London; a committee of prominent American citizens in London was formed. The British and Belgian Governments promised their aid; the German Government gave its sanction—so necessary and essential to the work; Italy and Spain declared their eagerness to help to the extent of their ability; the co-operation of the native Belgian Relief Committees was obtained and organized. Thus—not more than four weeks ago from the day on which I write—the Commission for Relief in Belgium came into existence and—quite simultaneously—set to work. It might well have been appalled at the task before it—even paralyzed, unable to see how even to begin, how to set about so vast a job. It showed, in fact, no sign of such a state of mind. On the contrary, it showed every indication of an intention to “make good.”

What Americans Have Already Done

Wonders have been achieved—it is not to my interest to exaggerate, and I am not exaggerating. A network of organization covers Belgium from the capital to the remotest districts. Thirty-eight steamers, aggregating 150,000 tons, are—or shortly will be—no doubt they will be by the time these lines are read—carrying about 128,000 tons of relief supplies, valued at over eight million dollars and involving an immense expenditure in transport. Very large sums of money have been received. In Brussels alone 600,000 meals a day are being provided. An organization has been built up in the United States capable of dealing with and forwarding into Belgium about one million pounds worth of food every month—while, at the other end, the Belgian organization is adequate to

secure its proper, honest, and careful distribution. Such results, achieved in so brief a space of time, proves that for once, anyhow, a Committee can act not only wisely and energetically but—quickly! A matter of moment when famine is the enemy it fights!

Well begun's half done! In a true sense we may comfort and encourage ourselves with the old saying. Preliminary difficulties—international and diplomatic—have been overcome. The organization is there. The men and women to work it are there. The thing which looked impossible has been shown to be possible.

Hurry the Fleet of Mercy

If you glance through the reports which the Commission receives from its representatives in Belgium, you come on striking facts simply stated. In Brussels, rich and poor stand in a line waiting for meals at a half-penny a head—to those who can pay so much. A deputation from Terhaegen states that for three weeks they have had only potatoes to eat there. At Wetteren—an industrial town of about 17,000 people—above 11,000 are “without resources.”

At Hamme, flour is hardly to be obtained, meat and corn will not last out the month, petrol and coal are unobtainable—with winter coming on; the soldier's families cannot get their allowances paid; work cannot be resumed at the factories.

At St. Nicholas 20,000 people are “without bread and without work.” At Charleroi men maddened by hunger attacked a German military train laden with provisions. At Namur, Dinant and Malines the poor have no shelter.

At Malines above 12,000 mouths have to be fed every day, and “the children come to the German

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soldiers and tear the bread from their hands—the soldiers divide the bread with them. (Hats off to the German soldiers who do this!) The Burgomaster of Liege sends thanks on behalf of 600,000 people for the temporary relief of “a desperate situation.”

Brussels itself is “the saddest place you can imagine.” “Shops closed, every one out of work, nothing but beggars and distress on all sides.” There is no need to multiply these sad examples. They tell of a whole country prostrate, helpless, lacking the barest necessities of life.

The Many Voyages That Must Be Made

They are enough to fire the imagination and touch the heart—enough to make us understand at once the imperative need and the extreme magnitude of the work which the Commission for Relief has undertaken and so well initiated. And it is no case of a passing need—of a brief emergency. The Fleet of Mercy is on the seas, but it must make many voyages. For seven or eight months at least the stream of supplies must be kept up. It may be for longer; no man can tell. And the stream must flow in a great volume. The Commission has to think in millions—in terms of millions of tons of foodstuffs, in terms of millions of dollars of money. Five million dollars a month—in cash or in kind—is the figure at which the need is approximately assessed. No one who thinks over the matter will consider the estimate immoderate. The nations of Europe are spending, we are told, on war fifty million dollars—not every month but *every day*. If anybody wants to gasp—instead of helping—let him gasp at that!

But helping—not gasping—is the rôle which the Commission has chosen for itself, and there is little fear that the countries which it represents will choose any other. Foremost among them, by force of circumstances, stands America. She has generous helpers. The belligerent countries cannot send supplies, but their citizens can help with money. Italy and Spain are helping. Canada and Australia are helping, notwithstanding that they have other very pressing claims on their resources. But the United States of America stand in the forefront of this particular battle. America is great and rich—and she is not at war. Such a position constitutes in itself an obligation which America has been swift to recognize, and creates an opportunity which, with her spirit and her traditions, she was not likely to miss. She sees that, unless she does this work, it cannot be done at all—and Belgium must be left to starve.

The Hands That Reach Over the Seas

“Perish the thought!” says America—as they used to say in the old melodramas. But being emphatically a business people as well as a generous people, Americans know very well that it is not an easy job that they have undertaken to tackle. On the contrary, it is a tough job and a long one. A spasm of emotion will not serve to put it through. The efforts of a few charitable societies or a few compassionate individuals cannot cope with it. It is a national work—one wherein every citizen should have a part and should not count that part played until the work is done. It is in this spirit that the Commission for Relief entered on its task. America has not failed and surely

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will not fail to justify its confidence that she would be found ready and willing to answer the call which it made on her benevolence. This year will be memorable in the history of the world. For decades and generations to come men will recall it and speak of its woes and its glories. The nations at war will have their memories of deadly struggle, of vacillating fortunes, of defeat and victory; wellnigh every household will have its hero to honor or commemorate. The nations that have escaped the scourge and have not passed through the furnace of trial may have their memories also—less poignant, it may be, but more gracious, not less honorable, and, turn the fortunes of war how they may, devoid of all bitterness.

A rare fragrance sweetens the memory of deeds of mercy. Such a memory every one who aids in saving Belgium is helping to build up for his country. He is helping too—and at a season when such help is sorely needed—to keep alive the tradition of brotherly love, of friendship and comradeship among the nations of the earth. The mind of man can conceive no worthier

occasion for the rich to give abundantly from their abundance, for the humble to spare something, if not out of their purses, then from their larder, their granary, or their storeroom. For it is just food that is wanted—that men and women may not die, and may have wherewithal to give to their little children when they cry for hunger. But the men and women are a multitude—and who shall number the children? It is not safe for anyone to reckon that his contribution can be spared.

But there is no need to strike a note of doubt. I do not believe that there is room for doubt. America does not love failure. With the help of her generous allies, out of her own great resources, with her splendid power of organization controlling and directing the impulse of her charity, America will see that no failure attends on the enterprise which has had so magnificent an inception under the auspices of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

The signal is made—"Save our Souls!" The Fleet of Mercy sails to the rescue.

"Not Bread Alone, But Bread Before All Else"

By A. E. W. MASON

We have grown so familiar with stupendous things that we can hardly see them in a true perspective except by a comparison. We need not go far back, however, the seventies will do very well.

In those days children were instructed in the Seven Wonders of the World. It does not appear that any schoolmaster of unusual pedantry fixed the number. People were quite content with it. There were Seven Wonders of the World and no more. The Falls of Niagara were one, and the Pyramids were another.

In 1914 the class has to be enlarged. Parallel lines of trenches full of soldiers fighting, which stretch from the North Sea through Belgium to the eastern border of France, and thence southwards to Belfort on the edge of Switzerland, that complicated box of death the modern battleship, the aeroplane, the submarine, the heroic persistence of men under a shell-fire inconceivably murderous—here are real wonders, wonders of achievement, wonders of the quality of men.

The tragedy is that they are employed in the service of destruction—all except one. It is not included in the list which I have given. For it stands by itself—a resplendent example of what a great neutral nation with a generous heart can do when the world's at war.

Six weeks ago one would have thought that there could be no his-

tory for neutral nations while this war went on. So wide is its field, so terrible and strange are its engines, so tremendous must the consequences of its issue be for the future of the world. But the judgment would have been wrong. Already Mr. Whitlock, the American Minister in Brussels, distressed by the misery of civilian Belgium, had appealed urgently for help to his colleagues in London.

U. S. Representatives Not Timid

The representatives of the United States at foreign courts are happily not a timid fraternity. Sure of themselves and of their race, they take responsibility as their daily bread. Dr. Page, convinced by the facts, appointed on his own initiative a committee of American citizens in London, and gave to it the stupendous work of feeding the non-combatant population of the devastated country. The American Commission for Relief in Belgium came into being. It called across the Atlantic for money and food, and America answered to the call. She discovered her neutrality to be not a fetter, but an opportunity.

Of the belligerents, only one could feed Belgium—Germany, which was in possession; and Germany would not. Of the neutral nations America alone had the prestige and the means. The Spanish and the Italian peoples have helped, and will help. Canada, in spite of the demands upon her, has

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contributed nobly. The Comité National de Secours in Brussels itself has lent what aid it could. England, which houses half a million Belgian refugees already, is contributing too.

But the great burden falls upon America, the great neutral nation. She intervenes by reason of her neutrality. Though officially she sides with none of the belligerents, she carries her knapsack like them all. And no history of this great world war can ever be written which will not add a shining laurel to the fame of the United States.

Let us be clear about the necessity for America's intervention. Belgium is an industrial, not an agricultural country. In normal times she imports two-thirds of her food supply, and pays for it with the products of the factories and mines.

Now her factories are either ruined by fire or worked for Germany under German supervision; the very roots have been grubbed up from her fields; her stores have been commandeered; her mines shut down. There is no food in Belgium for the Belgians; no means of earning it, and neither coal nor oil to cook it with; and there are some millions of Belgians, after all the refugees have been deducted, wandering helplessly about their empty land, sitting on the broken doorsteps of roofless cottages, crowded in the dark holds of canal boats, and looking out from silent houses upon the streets of cities where there is no traffic but the traffic of soldiers and no business but the business of war.

Death a Happy Destiny

Germany would not help. There must be no shadow of doubt upon that point to check the outflow of American charity.

"War is war," says the German

captain when he sinks a little cargo ship at sea.

War is war, and Belgium must starve. Germany will not lift a little finger to prevent it.

In this crisis America intervened.

Oh, those mute myriads that spoke
loud to me,
The eyes that craved to see the
light, the mouths,
That sought the daily bread and
nothing more,
The hands that supplicated handi-
work,
Men that had wives, and women
that had babes,
And all these pleading just to live,
not die.

The plea was heard. The American Relief Committee was established in London. Dr. Page appointed as its Chairman Mr. H. C. Hoover, who had already done great work on the repatriation of the ten thousand Americans stranded in Europe at the beginning of the war; Colonel Hunsiker, Captain T. B. Lucey, Messrs. J. B. White, Edgar Rickard, Millard Shaler, to quote the names of a few of the Committee, threw themselves into the work. Within a month they had co-ordinated under one organization the committees in Italy and Spain and Brussels; they had made their appeal in America; they had created the greatest food supply proposition—I *must* use a really American word, no other would be appropriate to this gigantic achievement—which the world has ever known.

A Dream Come True

Bankers, merchants, ship-owners, statesmen applauded the idea—and were confident that an idea it would remain. Five million dollars a month would be required to give

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half a soldier's rations a day into the hands of each famished Belgian. It was a dream, a fine vision, untranslatable into the bitter world of fact. American energy and kindness none the less translated it.

A promise was obtained from Baron von der Goltz, the German Governor of Belgium, that all food imported by the Committee should be exempt from requisition by the military authorities, and should remain at the disposal of the Commission for the use of the Belgian population. An office was opened in Broadway under the Vice-Chairmanship of Mr. Linden Bates, with Robert D. M. Carter as Honorary Secretary. Thirty-eight steamers, to carry 28,000 tons of supplies, were chartered.

The coöperation of all the organizations of women in the United States was secured. Arrangements were made with two great shipping firms in London and one in New York to manage the Commission's shipping without charge. And at once from England, from Canada, from the great cities and States of America, from New York to California, contributions of money and kind began to come in. Forty thousand dollars were at once collected in Chicago, hundreds of thousands in California, Kansas, Idaho, Washington, Iowa, Maine, Virginia, North Carolina, New York, Minnesota, Delaware, Oregon and Pennsylvania in the United States, while Ottawa, Halifax, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia, in Canada, set about collecting cargoes, while the American railways from ocean to ocean carry the gifts to the ports of loading free of charge.

A Stirring Tale Told

Early in November the first relief ship, the Jan Block, reached Rot-

terdam from the United States and England with two thousand tons of food. It was followed a little later by the Rockefeller Foundation ship *Massapequa*.

Those who like a stirring tale may well turn to the Commission's narrative of the arrival of that boat, and read how five hundred stevedores leaped aboard before she was made fast and broke all the records of the port by the speed of their unloading.

By the seventh of November four hundred thousand meals a day, soup and bread, bacon and potatoes, were being issued in Brussels alone at the price of a halfpenny a meal. Well-to-do and poor lined up alike to wait their turn. By the twenty-second of the month the daily number was half as much again. By November 16 the Burgomaster of Liege had sent, on behalf of its six hundred thousand citizens, a courier to Rotterdam to thank the Commission for relieving them for the moment from their desperate need.

A careful subdivision of duties has now enabled the Commission to reach all the provinces of the country. Let it be noted, finally, that the German authorities have given every facility for the food-barges to pass along the canals, have refrained from levying any tax upon their contents, have made easy the distribution through the country districts, and that every dollar contributed in America goes in its entirety to the purchase of food.

To feed a nation—that is a stupendous task which the generosity of America has taken upon its shoulders. Surely there was never a more urgent calamity more nobly grappled with. Is not one right in declaring that no history of the great world-war of 1914 can be written which does not pay its tribute to the United States?

The Case of Belgium

By GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

If I were to say to a Belgian that fine words butter no parsnips, he would wonder what on earth I meant. That is perhaps fortunate; for if ever a nation had reason to remind the world of that saying, it is the Belgian nation at the present crisis.

I am afraid many of us have a rather complacent impression that France and Britain came in a very handsome way to the rescue of brave little Belgium, and that it is a noble trait in their character that they have upheld the Treaty of London (1829) these seventy-five years for Belgium's benefit. Now the King of the Belgians is far too chivalrous to let fall one word in criticism of that attitude. Therefore, as gentlemen, we who are on the Franco-British side must criticize it ourselves. We must confess that though Belgium has saved us, we have not saved Belgium. At the battle of Waterloo the British lay down snugly behind the ridge, and placed the Belgian brigade on the exposed forward slope of it to be hammered to pieces by the terrible cannonade and then cut to ribbons by the charges that routed our own artillery. And some English writers were not ashamed to disparage Belgian valor because the British squares stood up to the charges at the top of the hill when the uncovered Belgian brigade fell before a hail of cannon balls. No Belgian then complained of being allotted the post of danger; it was his right on his own soil to claim it. History repeated itself at Liege.

There, too, Belgium was at the post of danger. There she held the bridge for the whole west of Europe against Prussia, and never once looked back to ask, "Where are the French and British?" Where, indeed? Alas! it was a long way to Tipperary; and what were Napoleon's twelve-pounders and twenty-four-pounders to the Kaiser's howitzers that from impossible distances could blow whole forts into the sky? Well, all the generals of Britain and France have since come into the field; but none of them can yet claim the laurel of the mathematician of Liege who called his admiring captors to witness that he had been taken alive only because he had been taken insensible. To his magnificent warriorship even the Prussians took off their hats. Nothing that we can say about it can pay our debt to it.

For I repeat, France and Britain did not save Belgium. Liege fell. Brussels has fallen, and Antwerp, and Ghent, and Bruges, and Ostend. Louvain has been sacked more scientifically than Ismail by Suwarow; towns like Termonde have had the fiery chariot of war driven to and fro over their corpses until they are thrice slain, like the dead in a liar's story; and the Belgian Government has been driven out into a foreign land. What worse could have happened to Belgium had she stood alone against the world? Well may her enemy laugh to scorn "the scrap of paper" that guaranteed her integrity. It will be time enough for Belgium's

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friends to revile Germany for that when they have made the scrap of paper good.

For they must make it good. If they do not drive the Germans out of Belgium and offer their armies as the guard of honor to the most popular monarch in Europe on the day when he takes his seat again on his throne in Brussels, they will be either dishonored or beaten. If they sign a treaty leaving the Kaiser one square inch of Belgian soil except under such compulsion as would force them to give him Portsmouth, Belfort and Verdun as well, they may as well tear up their flags and live by letting lodgings to foreigners and cheating them over their bills.

Most unfortunately for Belgium, it has been almost impossible hitherto to procure publicity for an adequate acknowledgment of this obligation or a fair statement of her case. The horror inspired by war is so great that all the belligerent nations began by insisting that they were engaged in a defensive war. They would have it that they were the innocent victims of an unscrupulous and unexpected aggression. Germany protests that she is defending her frontiers from a conspiracy of France with Russia and England to destroy her. England until very recently claimed that she had been rudely awakened from a dream of perpetual peace by Germany's violation of the treaty of 1839, guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium. Austria was avenging an assassination. Russia was rescuing a gallant little Slavonic nation from Teutonic imperialism. France was wrestling with a wanton invasion. None of them would admit any responsibility for the war. Consequently none of them would admit any responsibility for the devastation of Belgium.

Sympathy? Yes, any quantity of

sympathy. Compliments to her heroism? Yes, dithyrambs galore. Reinforcements? By all means; the British and French guns are raining shells on Belgian villages and towns as liberally as the Germans; in fact, they now boast of having established a superiority in artillery, which means that no German can live within range of their howitzers and of the famous *soixante quinze*. Splendid, but no Belgian can live within that range either; and the net result is that there are seven million Belgians deprived of their means of livelihood in their own country (not counting refugees who have left it) who must perish of simple starvation unless a million pounds a month, or five million dollars, or twenty-five million francs are forthcoming to feed them.

And where is the Belgian Government to find those millions when it is itself exiled and ruined? Mr. Partridge's fine cartoon shows us King Albert facing the Kaiser with his country ravaged but his honor intact; but King Albert cannot pawn his honor for a million a month, nor can his people live on cartoons. The very Germans themselves are treating Belgium better than the Allies; for they at least assume charge of the cities they have seized, and, by treating them as German cities by right of conquest, accept responsibility for the inhabitants.

The Allies shake their fists and cry, "We shall come and bombard you and drive you out and run up the Belgian flag presently; just you wait and see," which is all very martial and proper in its way; but look at it from the point of view of a hungry child and the parents to whom it is crying in vain for bread, and deny, if you can or dare, that there is something more imperative in that child's call to the justice of

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Providence, more terrible and sacred in its appeal to your own conscience, and more agonizing in the grip it lays on your very entrails, than all the threats, all the defiance, all the carnage and the glory and the crosses, Iron and Victoria and Legion (the only sort of crosses worshipped in war time), and all the thundering explosions that drown every groan and every cry except that curious, magical cry that penetrates everything—the cry of the hungry child.

We must face the truth and shoulder our responsibility. There is only one country on which this war has been forced; and that country is Belgium. And all the belligerent countries have forced this war on her. It matters not which side you take—that of Germany and Austria or that of France, Russia and Britain—the fact remains, for you as for those who oppose you, that Belgium was utterly powerless to prevent either of these warlike alliances, and that it has been openly known to all the world for years that when the two finally came to blows, the first attack would inevitably be made by Germany through Belgium. There was no concealment about it. The strategic railway system leading to the Belgian frontier was not a secret in a pigeon hole, nor were the articles in which Mr. Belloc and other military experts pointed to Liege as the predestined first battlefield any less public than the latter articles in which *The Times* congratulated Mr. Belloc on the exactness of his forecast.

On a previous occasion (1870), Britain had offered her own neutrality as the price of Belgium's; and Belgium was spared at that price. This time such a price was out of the question. All

the Powers proceeded with strict correctness. France and Britain readily undertook to respect Belgian neutrality *if* Germany respected it—a very proper pledge, but of little comfort to Belgium when all the parties knew that Germany would not respect it. Germany with equal readiness declared her determination to respect international conventions and not to lose sight of the fact that Belgian neutrality was guaranteed by international treaties. But there is a hole in all neutrality treaties through which any State can drive a coach-and-six. Germany drove a whole army through it. She asked for a right of way for her army, undertaking to pay all expenses and to make good all unavoidable damages; and she added that a refusal would place her at such a disadvantage that she would interpret it as an act of war on the part of Belgium. Britain then informed the Belgian Government that she expected Belgium to resist the passage of Germany by every means in her power; and the terms of this communication were sufficiently peremptory to suggest that compliance with Germany's demand might be taken as an act of war on the Allies.

Thus Belgium was between the devil and the deep sea. She was forced to make her soil the field of battle for the most destructive warfare ever waged in the world's history. Can it be denied that there is here no question of the romantic rescue of a distressed nation by British and French knights errant, but a deliberate infliction upon her of a frightful calamity by those who professed to defend her no less than by those who made war on

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her? Grant, if you like, that the calamity was necessary and inevitable; that it will end in a happier, freer, better Europe, as all the belligerents declare it must if only they are victorious. All the more reason why its cost should be spread over all the nations, and not flung with crushing weight on Belgium, who had no European grievances, no European ambitions, no stake in the Balkans, no dread of Russia, no quarrel with France or Germany, and no complications with England.

Yet it is on her soil that the mighty armies of these other Powers insist on fighting their battles; it is her cities that they bombard, her villages that they sweep away in hurricanes of fire, and her people whom they ruin and murder; whilst, as if all this were not enough, the Germans force her to take up arms herself in defence of her national honor, and the French and British use her army as an auxiliary force, and thrust it into the forefront of the battle to take the first assault of the best prepared belligerent until they are themselves quite ready to take the field in earnest. If Belgium proudly accepted that peril without a remonstrance, are we to make her acceptance an excuse for denying our full responsibility in the matter?

So far, I have put the position with strict impartiality as between the two belligerent alliances; for I know quite well how tired the neutral nations are of the endless assurances they receive of the spotless innocence of the people who give the assurances and the abandoned villainy of their opponents. But I must now dwell on the services rendered

to western democracy by Belgium when she at last had to take sides in the conflict. That point was reached when, after she had vindicated her honor and proved her military capacity by her thrilling defence of Liege, the Germans made a full acknowledgment of her prowess, and renewed their offer to pay their way and respect her national rights. Now there can be no question that Belgium, having done enough for honor, and indeed astonished Europe by doing much more than enough, would have been held justified in accepting Germany's proposal. Many people still think that she should have done so; and they are right as far as her own immediate interest was concerned.

But Belgium took a larger view. She refused the offer in the interests of democracy, which was the real issue at stake between Prussia and France, and thereby placed not only all democratic Europe but America as well under a sacred obligation to her. If she had done this at a moment when she was reinforced by the armies of France and Britain, and elated by a prospect of immediate triumph for them, we might have discounted her action as a mere exercise of prudence. But she did it when her position was desperate; when her enemy was pressing her with overwhelmingly superior numbers; and when her friends, who had quite failed her at Liege, were unable to hold their own ground or even to resist being swept back almost to the gates of Paris. Brussels was defenceless; and Antwerp, the city most precious to Belgium and most coveted by Germany, could no longer, after the fate of the Liege forts, imagine itself impregnable.

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Yet Belgium did not hesitate. She sacrificed Antwerp and saved Calais, and all that Calais meant, not to her, but to France and England, and through England to America.

If, after this, one Belgian goes without a full meal whilst thousands of lapdogs are living in luxury from Canterbury to San Francisco and from Biarritz to Venice, there is really nothing more to be said for mankind.

Britain's duty in the matter is very clear. She should relieve Holland of her ruinous overload of Belgian refugees. Holland's hospitality has been wonderful; but her resources are hopelessly overtaxed by it; she cannot provide for the material wants of the refugees and of her own now dangerously overcrowded frontier villages and towns. The British Government should quite simply offer to transport Belgian refugees to the British Islands, preferably to Ireland, a Catholic country where there is plenty of room, and give them all the advantages enjoyed by our prisoners of war without the loss of their liberty. It would be fair to extend this succor to refugees in France also, because, as the war is now being waged on French soil, the French have their own refugees on their hands. Also—though no Frenchman or Belgian will confirm me in this—I am persuaded that in England, where every Belgian is a stranger and a hero, he will be more comfortable than in France, where he is not exactly a foreigner and not exactly a Frenchman, and is therefore sometimes a little at a disadvantage.

But all this leaves untouched the plight of the Belgians in Belgium. The efforts that are being

made to help the Belgians in France and Holland and England do not reach them. Their position is desperate, and must remain so until the Germans are driven out of their country. In the parts held by the Germans their plight is bad enough; for as the Germans are in the position of a tenant with a very short lease, they will not spend money on the premises, being indeed much more bent on removing everything that is not a fixture; and elsewhere all the industries are at a standstill because of the war.

There is absolutely nothing between them and starvation except the contributions of all citizens of the world, who realize that if Belgium had done nothing more than raise the courage of the whole world by her astonishing feat of holding up an apparently irresistibly superior force for just long enough to save French democracy from annihilation and give the prestige of Prussian militarism its first and most surprising check, a contribution to the funds of the Commission for Relief in Belgium is the payment of a debt, and not a caprice of charity. I have tried to show, I hope successfully, that the circumstances under which that service was rendered greatly add to the obligation, and in particular that Belgium, though first and bravest in the field, is the one belligerent there who cannot by any possible sophistry be accused of having brought about the bloodshed and destruction from which she has been the greater sufferer.

Everywhere you will find men angrily asserting or denying that Russia willed this war, that Germany willed it, that Austria willed it, that Britain willed it, that France willed

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it. Nobody asserts that Belgium willed it except the Prussian militarists trying to make a desperate case for the lengths to which the worst usages of war have been pushed against Belgium; and them no disinterested person even pretends to believe.

I therefore make, not an appeal, but a claim on Belgium's behalf which she is too gracious to make for herself. She has taken for her people with the thanks due to a benefactor the payments offered by her debtors, and has never reminded us that we have paid but a small instalment of what we owe her. It is true that the debt has been ac-

knowledgeed by all England's most illustrious spokesmen, poets and composers, in King Albert's Gift Book.

But we must pay as well as acknowledge; and we must even pay the more generously as our acknowledgment has stopped short, just so far short of complete justice as our bias about the war stops short of the utter honest truth about it. And that truth is, as I have said, that of all the belligerents, Belgium—and Belgium alone—is innocent of all warlike designs; whilst, as to the neutral nations, there is not one of them that will not be a gainer by Belgium's sacrifice.

An Appeal to Americans

By **The Commission for** **Relief in Belgium**

Official Clearing House for All Belgium Relief

We, as Americans, are enlisted for the war to save seven million men, women and children. It is the greatest commissary undertaking in the history of the world, and in the lexicon of America there is no such word as fail.

We Need Food Supplies as Well as Cash

Every penny donated to this Commission goes, without reserve, for the purchase of food. Money donated will be credited to your state, and whenever it can be done advantageously, spent within the borders of your state. We pay the freight from a special fund donated to organization and transportation

Railroads, express companies, post-offices, governors, and state committees are aiding. Our Flotilla of Mercy, comprising thirty-five chartered ships, is constantly carrying food. **But—Our Supplies Are Far Too Short.**

Has Your State Sent a Ship to Belgium?

Is It Planning to Send One?

Is there a committee for Belgium relief in your community?

If there is none, start one under our official sanction.

Are You Helping?

If Not, Send in Your Name Now?

Make out your check or money order, or send cash either to the state committee sanctioned by this Commission or to the New York Headquarters:

The Commission for **Relief in Belgium**

71 Broadway, New York City, N. Y.

Checks to the Woman's Section should be made
out to

Miss Anne Morgan, Treasurer
No. 1 Madison Ave., New York